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Florence, Italy, May 5th 1889.

My Dear Wife; It is now half-past six Sabbath afternoon. There was a shower of rain about two or three o'clock, but it has cleared off again bright and pleasant. It is warm in the sun to-day, but the air is pleasant. I find it a little cool to sit in the house without my light overcoat. I took off my heavy flannels at Naples, on wednesday morning, and so I must be a little careful for a few days. Unless it gets warm enough before a great while to wear my light suit, I fear I shall have to get a coat of some kind. My cloth coat is beginning to look pretty shabby. I will try to make it last till I can wear my light suit. I reached Florence at three o'clock yesterday (Friday) afternoon. It took some time to get to the hotel, get my room arranged, &c. I then started to the Post-office, stopping a little while as I passed to look at the Cathedral and the Baptistry. The Cathedral is quite different from any thing in the church line I have yet seen. The exterior is quite showy and handsome, but the interior is a great barn, with very little finish or ornament. The stained glass windows are fine, I suppose, though I have not looked at them carefully yet. I glanced at the Bronze doors of the Baptistry as I passed. They are beautiful and exquisite. The small figures seem so perfect.

At the Post office I got your letter and postal mailed April 18th. On my way back I looked longer at the Cathedral and Baptistry. Just near one corner of the front of the church stands the Campanile, or Bell Tower. It is quite showy and handsome, and very high. There are three sets of Bronze doors in the Baptistry, which is an odd-looking Octagonal building standing in a little square just across the street from the front of the Cathedral. The doors are all beautiful, but there is more fine work on one pair than on the other two. I want to look at them more carefully yet. In going around the building, I found the last pair of doors open. So, I went in. It is used as a church. Candles were lighted at the principal altar, &c. There were two or three others in looking around. Just then a family came in with a wee baby to be baptized. I should judge they were people in quite moderate circumstances. They were dressed in their "Sunday best", and baby was fixed up quite fine.

The old Priest put on his white garments (I am not sure what the proper name is — I am not posted in Ecclesiastical millinery) and got every thing ready. His assistant. He had a little young man for assistant, who held the long candle & said Ah-men at the proper places — just as though he were a machine and had been wound up with a crank. For that matter the Priest was a good deal like a machine too.

He hurried through with the business as quickly as possible, made the proper entries in the Church Register, the fee was paid, and the family went home.

The ceremony was not a very impressive one.
It was so dark in the church I could not see much.

Yesterday I started out pretty early, looked around the square adjoining the City Buildings for an hour, until the Picture Gallery was opened at ten o'clock.
This is the old Building which has stood so long, and which was originally, I believe, the seat of the Signoria, the Government of the Republic, then the Palace of Cosimo I, and now the City Hall, &c. It is called the Palazzo Vecchio.

At the N. E. Corner of the building is an immense and remarkable fountain. The central figure is an immense marble one of Neptune; at each of the four corners is a bronze group consisting of three large figures and several small ones.
The fountain occupies the place where the stake stood at which Savonarola was burned in 1498. In the centre of the square is an immense bronze statue of Cosimo the I.

At ten o'clock the doors were opened and a number of us who were waiting ascended to the Uffizzi Gallery. I forget how many steps there are — about 140 I think.
It is a very large gallery, and a great many good pictures, but the best are gathered in one moderate sized room, called the "Tribune." In this room are five marble statues, all celebrated. The Venus di Medici, the Knife Grinder, The Little Apollo, The Dancing Faun, and The Wrestlers. I suppose the Venus is all right, but I could not help feeling a little disappointed in it. Somehow it did not come up to my expectations. The others are all very fine.
There are quite a number of pictures in the room, by Raphael, Titian, and other eminent artists. Titians, are very fine, but very objectionable. I think by far the best picture in the room, and one of the two or three best, if not the best, I have seen in Florence, is St. John in the Desert, by Raphael. It is really a wonderful picture. I shall try to get a good photograph of it.
A passage or gallery leads from the Uffizzi gallery up the street some distance, then across one of the bridges spanning the Arno, and then on quite a distance to the Picture Gallery in the Pitti Palace.
So when I was tired looking at the Uffizzi Gallery, I started for the Pitti. This passage is hung nearly all the way with pictures. At first, for quite a distance with drawings and engravings, and then with portraits of the Medici family, portraits of Kings and Queens of various Countries, portraits of eminent Scholars, Artists, &c.
There are a great many more fine pictures in the Pitti Gallery than in the Uffizzi. A Madonna, by Raphael, is considered next best to the Sistine Madonna. I will try to get a good photograph of it.
I will tell you more about some of the others when I come. I cannot go into details in a letter.

I have but little idea how many pictures there are in these two Galleries, but altogether, of every kind, there must be several thousand. If one could pick out about twenty, however, the rest would not seem very valuable.

I did think a little of leaving Florence to-morrow morning, but I am not quite ready yet, and I wish to rest a little. After I left the Gallery yesterday at four o'clock, I got on the Tramway and went out three or four miles to Fiesole, on the mountain side. The view of Florence from there is very fine.

I was at the Scotch Church to-day. The Pastor, Rev. J. D. McDougall, is an excellent preacher. His text was, "Who though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich." It was their regular day for Communion Service. It is the regular day for Communion at the University, but it has been uncertain of late whether the Service occurs at the appointed time.

This afternoon, we had addresses from two Swedish Missionaries, who have been working for a number of years on the East Coast of Africa.

In the beginning of my letter, I mentioned that I got your letter and postal. I was very sorry, and a little disappointed, to find you were no better. I hoped when you got to going out, your knee would get better more rapidly. I cannot understand it. I hope you have had Dr. Todd.

I cannot help feeling worried about you.

I suppose everything has been done that could be, and yet I wish I was at home. I am going ahead trying to get all the benefit I can from my trip, but I am not enjoying it so much as I might.

I hope I may get another letter from you to-morrow. I expect to leave here early Tuesday morning, stop a few hours at Pisa, and then go on to Genoa and spend the night there. On Wednesday go to Milan. Make an excursion from there for a couple of days, to see Lakes Como, Lugano, &c. If I find it very pleasant, I may stay there somewhere till Monday morning, and then go direct to Paris. I think it possible, however, that I may go part way to Paris on Saturday.

I wish I knew how you are to-day! I cannot keep from thinking about you.

The lines you enclosed are very pretty.

It is now late and I cannot write much more to-night. I may add a line in the morning.

How has Mrs. Prentiss taken it about Jack's being

put on probation for drinking? That is an odd arrangement about the boarding at Mrs. Flattery's.

What you tell me about the Artistes Parties is an indication that things are not in the shape they should be on the hill. Please send me a catalogue as soon as they are out. I think you must have my letter by this time, in which I told you where to write — Paris and London. I think after this it will be best to write altogether to London, and I will have letters forwarded from there. At all the Post offices they are very prompt and accurate about forwarding. Remember me to all.

With much love,

Good night.

My dear Wife; It is now seven o'clock Monday morning here; with you I suppose it is now about one o'clock. I hope you are sleeping soundly and that you will continue to do so for some hours to come. How I wish I could send you a bouquet of these Italian flowers every day. This is, emphatically the land of flowers. They have them for sale at stands on the street corners, in stores, and about the streets. The roses are lovely, and many other flowers also, some of them very fragrant. I suppose they sell them very cheap, also.

I have no very definite plan for to-day. I intend to rest some. It is cloudy this morning, and may not turn out a pleasant day. I may go into the picture galleries again, for a while.

I do hope you are feeling better by this time. Remember me kindly to all who inquire for me. Remember me to all at home.

Your loving husband,

S. J. Kirkwood.